

# **CWU North West Regional Health and Safety Conference**

## **11<sup>th</sup> April 2025 Jamie McGovern**



It should be me giving you a round of applause because of the work you do. I mean someone described, I think it might have been Hazard Centre in Manchester, described safety vests as a volunteer army of lifesavers and that's exactly what you are. I mean I will just go back to the pandemic before I start my presentation.

I remember the pandemic so well in Merseyside because we had three of the highest infection rates in the UK and I'll never forget the work the local safety reps did in Knowsley, in Wirral, and in Liverpool to keep people safe during the Covid pandemic and I've no doubt those people saved lives because during that time our trained safety reps were leading managers on how to do Covid risk assessments.

I was the ADH at Merseyside at the time and we got the Covid compliance team into Knowsley because of a risk assessment that was done by a local rep who took the real challenge on by confronting the managers over a not safe workplace.

The Covid compliance team went in and the business were fined but I'll never forget the flack that that local rep took but what she did do is she stood proud, she stood tall and she represented this union and she was just one of hundreds of reps up and down the country keeping people safe during the Covid pandemic and that will never be forgotten by me or others too.

So I'm just going to move into a bit of a presentation, tell you a little bit about what the new role is that I'm involved in, a little bit of the emerging risks that we're looking at now and why I think we need to be quite proactive rather than reactive as a union to these emerging risks that are now coming forth and obviously you can see on there there's a picture of Dave Joyce who left his national position in July of 2024 and obviously it was nine months before I got into the new role as the policy assistant working to the central services department and working to the GS.

I think for me though I need to emphasise what a huge person Dave Joyce has been within the CWU and his absolute commitment to the role that he's given over the last you know decades.

In fact, when I got the role Dave rung me, he was on holiday and he said my phone is always open to you, always ring me and I'll always guide you and support you as best I can.

I said to him Dave you're nearly 72, it's about time, it's about time you slow down and he said no I mean it Jamie, he said I am there for you and every single safety that I've there, I'm always there, I'm a listener near and if you ever need me he said you know you ring and make sure people receive that same message, I'm always there,

I'm always ready to support people because you look at Dave Joyce it was his life you know and health and safety keep people safe you know and the way he did again during the pandemic saved lives you know so it wouldn't be remiss of me if I didn't mention Dave Joyce and his desire and his commitment to still support even in retirement.

What I want to say is when I was at headquarters and I was looking at Dave's old office and one of the team members come around and said there's a few documents for you there to go through and decide whether you want to keep them, archive them or whether they're confidential waste so I said okay he said Dave's put them in his old office.

I went in and it was floor to ceiling full of archived documents from everything from asbestos from meeting with governments on dog attacks from some safety campaigns you know from manual handling honestly I mean I will share a picture in the WhatsApp groups but it was unbelievable the amount of work that this guy has got through over the years but if anybody needs any archived documents let me know; because they're sitting there in headquarters and very soon they will be put to confidential waste but I say I wouldn't be afraid if I didn't mention Dave Joyce and the work that he's done for us as a union.

So, I mean I'll just go into a few of the emerging risks as we see it and you know they are pan CWU risks by the way because the new role I've got for the central services team is going to be pan CWU looking at risks across all sectors and all industries.

And one of the first big risks that we're seeing now is, and a challenge to us as a trade union by the way, is to become more of an age sensitive trade union you know because if you look at the studies that are out there you know in the G7 group Britain is the worst in keeping people in work over the age of 55 you know and that is now becoming a real risk for us maintaining people in work over the age of 55. So, we need to become more age sensitive as a trade union and do more to support people as they're aging and as they're getting into the later years in the work and life.

You know National Older Workers Week for example how many people actually know when that is has anyone got an idea when National Older Workers Week is because we could be doing so much more on that. Well it's actually the end of November - can't see any hands going up - so that's that proves that people don't know when National Older Workers Week is now we should be surveying our members and identifying what they need and looking at what Europe are doing because I'll be honest with you Europe are way ahead of Britain in terms of keeping people in work over the age of 55 and introducing innovative schemes to try and keep people in work.

In some of our stress risk assessments that we've done over the last couple of years lots of them were people over 55 over 60 who were still mortgaged still had to stay in work, but were struggling because they couldn't stay in work because either the physicality of work or the task that would be important but too much for them as they were as they were getting older in life.

If you look at that a little graphic there in 10 to 11 years in poor health is due to stress. Later in life in work 10 to 11 years on average in poor health due to stress in work later in life. Now I've mentioned there that people in the UK over 55 are more likely to have left work and not returned than those countries in the G7 group.

But there are opportunities to move this forward for example sunsetting schemes which Europe run with now I've presented this down to in the GSA department to say look we should be looking at these sunsetting schemes and phased retirement to keep people into work longer and you look at I think it's Portugal take an hour off the work and week every year after the age of 55 till they're 60 you know.

So example did there you know if you imagine that taking an hour off your work and week every single year from the ages of 55 to 60 you would be on 32 hours and be paid 37 now in Europe and it's not the burden is not on the employer the burden is put on the state to pick up that that cost because they don't want the burden being important to them by people retiring too early and too soon.

So, this is something we can look at you know look at what Europe are doing to keep people in work because they are so much better than us and you look at our age profile it has dropped it's dropped since the pandemic.

Like an example Royal Mail, for example, where the age profile has dropped from 52 to 48 so you can see it's more difficult staying in work when the work is very very physical and it is physically demanding there's going to be new fatigue studies.

In Royal Mail we have to look at TFMS and look at the age sensitivity that they have because again you know we want to try and keep people in work longer and that's what people are telling us as a trade union, we want to stay in work longer but we don't want to actually collapse into retirement we want to ease into retirement so these schemes are something that we can certainly look at going forward.

In terms of another risk. I want to mention this that in psychological injury we are aiming to become the first suicide safer UK trade union that has to be our aim because the numbers the numbers are frightening you know in terms of what we expect as a trade union.

I'll put into context for you:

We have three of the largest fleets in on the road you know Royal Mail, BT, and Openreach.

Our reps are five times more likely to do a suicide than a roadside fatality.

That is the harsh reality you know so we need to do more on responding to suicide and becoming a suicide safer trade union is about trying to prevent tragic loss but also responding to it when it occurs.

You know postvention strategies are very very important you know there's 800,000 people affected by suicide every single year you know there's 18 people in the UK who will not get home to their families today because of the risk involved in suicide.

The World Health Organisation has identified it as a global risk issue so these are the organisations on the screen that we've been working with.

This one you can see on the screen is an organization called Five-a-Side Chess. One of the leading suicide prevention organisations in the UK we're actually next Tuesday in Liverpool to try and develop a new workshop course a reach course response evaluation and crisis heart course if anyone's interested to come along to that drop me an email because there are spaces if you want to attend because you can we're going to look at what's called trauma-informed first aid how it's applied in traumatic situations.

Even more recently we lost a colleague in rail very recently and our ASR, our area safety rep in that area did not find out about this suicide until a week or so later and he heard about it through word of mouth.

So, we have challenged the employees now the employees need to become more suicide safer and more suicidal aware and respond to suicide when it happens in the right way.

But you can see on the on the screen there these are well these are some of the workplace visits where Five-a-Side Chess is going to workplaces and that's the battling suicide bus and you can see that. I mean there's messages on the bus that people encourage to write messages on the bus but this course is flooded with messages.

I know one of our speakers later Tony you know there's a picture of Tony there when it went to speak and it's a very impactful day because it really did make people realize we need to do more as a nation obviously and more as a trade union.

But we've got to make sure that we keep the message that psychological injury is preventable and support after suicide has to be a key, basically a key risk issue, that we look at in terms of looking into those risks and I'm going to mention the workplace now and that we're trying to support at the moment, which is UTAW.

One of things about UTAW is it is one of the branches under the TF&S umbrella they've just come under the T&FS umbrella. and it's typical for UTAW because they're working in a non-unionised workplaces and they're trying to support and that graphic on the screen their tech workers are five times more likely to suffer mental health concerns compared to the wider population.

I'll explain how difficult it is for our college in UTAW because they are going into dealing with the employee who don't recognise unions and I've been speaking to Ellie from UTAW, and thankfully Ellie's here today. Give us a wave Ellie yeah and it's I just want to mention I think I always speak for everyone in this room, you know.

We've got to support colleagues like Ellie who is trying to set up a safety community in the non-recognised workplace and trying to get safety reps into UTAW because she sees the value of them.

What we want to try and do in UTAW is do a whole sector stress survey and you can see how easy it is to be done we can do this in any workplace by the way it doesn't have to be UTAW. You can do it in delivery office you can do it in a big safe parcel for us you can do it just by scanning on that QR code you can see. You can actually open the HSE standard risk assessment and so this is what we're going to do in UTAW. We're going to try and help them set up their safety community okay and we want to try and integrate them again within our wider recognised safety depth community.

And the other issue as well of course in terms of support, is making sure they understand what they can do when the survey results land because this will be done in line with the HSE standards when you survey people.

Because stress, it's pretty much out of control in lots of workplaces right now but you can't really do much about it unless you've got hard evidence because hard evidence from my experience is what the employer listens to and what it reacts to.

Again, I mentioned there about postvention so what does postvention support look like ?

You know you can scan on a QR code there you can see what a postvention policy looks like.

What you may not know is there was a motion to conference in 2022 national conference about getting a postvention policy in place so that reps are supported when they have to deal with a tragic occurrence and unfortunately what we do see is, that when we have a tragic occurrence, the reps are the first people that everyone else will go to.

It will go to the reps and we do see impact on the reps so we want to try and train reps up so we understand what postvention support is like and the circles of impact where they'll be.

So, we are going to develop this reach this reach training and again I've mentioned on Tuesday in Liverpool we are having a roundtable discussion anyone is welcome to come along to that but we are going to be developing these reach workshops especially for local reps so they can be reach trained and understand you know how to deal with situation.

Hopefully it doesn't occur but the reality is based on numbers 6,834 suicides last year that some CW members in the UK will be affected by suicide at some point so hopefully we'll get this postvention policy out and shared within the next couple of months.

I also want to mention our mental health network okay so yeah, I've mentioned the numbers but I also want to mention some good news stories our CW northwest mental health network is the biggest in the country of 500 trained plus mental health first aiders over 200 are in the northwest region and these people are doing fantastic work.

I'm going to mention these four people actually because I know they're not here today but some of you in the room may know these people I've mentioned these people once before when I spoke at the northeast forum.

These are humble lifesavers you've probably never even heard of and the lady on the left Laura I won't give a surname out but Laura used to work in one of our will units and she was sacked because she emptied the post box too early and we said we'd win a job back.

But she didn't want a job back and she left and she went to work for TransPennine Express so she was trained as a Mental Health First Aider by us in the CWU and she saved two lives on the tracks with the TransPennine Express.

She's now a safeguarding champion for the railway children okay, she's won a gold star community gold star on TransPennine Express and I approached Royal Mail and I said why would you want to sack someone like this you know when we've got someone like that an absolute champion of people saving lives out in the community.

But unfortunately, she did lose her job and for me for all the wrong reasons.

And Paul the other guy next to Laura saved the life of someone trusting his instincts in Liverpool when he was coming back from a charity home and saw a lady in crisis reached out went over trusted in his instincts waited until the police got there and the police phoned him, he said yeah, he said that was a crisis moment you've saved that lady's life tonight.

And the lady the lady's family messaged him afterwards and said that without your intervention you know, our daughter wouldn't have been here.

Again, Emma next to Paul there fantastic Emma was also on behalf of the CWU last year going to the final four and she saved the life of a colleague in one of the units and also supported someone on a delivery round who was struggling with it, with the mental health. And Emma reached out and did things in her own time to support this lady who she was delivering to.

And last, Chris who did win an inside out award last year. The mental health biker you know he reached out to me after and he was told about one of her rugby colleague's brothers who'd left the house in distress and Chris found the lad and he was in the process of looking for a place to complete suicide and Chris saved his life.

You know but then again Chris was really upset and impacted by what he what he did he didn't realize the impact of that on him. So, then we're trying to provide support for these individuals but I did want to find people because it just shows the value of a mental health network you know why we're doing it and we deliver that for free and we have done in the northwest since 2019.

And I know I'm looking around the room now, and there's lots of mental health first aiders in the room looking, looking back at me and without a shadow of a doubt I see you're bringing huge value to this union because of what you do.

We've not stopped delivering mental health first aid training if anybody wants if anybody wants to enrol on it, we'll deliver as many courses as we need to. Yes, we've got 200 plus mental health first aiders out there now in the North West but is 200 enough ?

No, we won't try and get one in every single workplace if we can't because of examples like these four people that I've just mentioned there. and this is a little slide actually we use when we're doing our mental health first training - the domino effect everything starts with a conversation. That's the organization I mentioned there five-a-side chess.

It's in the bottom right-hand corner there. You know we're now developing guided conversations with them they're the suicide prevention charity but you can see where they can lead to a guided conversation then you can have occupational health support identifying potential disability completing a risk assessment signpost and support and reasonable adjustments and most people do feel much better when they have equality and protection around them.

You know and I believe that this is what we should do more as a trade union.

If you look at mental health disability, I mean five years ago in my own branch we never had anyone covered for mental health disability and we realized it wasn't enough and then within a quick period of two years we had 179 people covered under the equality for mental health disability.

So, our challenge really and my challenge to everyone in the room is: we know that rest will do physical health disability risk assessments but don't be afraid to do a month for bipolar or clinical depression or PTSD or OCD because they are still disabilities.

You know we should be reaching out supporting these people and there's so many templates out there in the North West we've done well in terms of supporting people with mental health disability.

But to remind them it's just important as physical health disability too and in terms of the equality I just want to example something that was said to me in a tribunal case and last year in late last year probably in August, September last year I was the former colleague who was taken on the employer because disability was unrecognized.

And the employment judge actually, I was in the room with him and we didn't have any team partners or union support but we it was our colleague and the employment judge said, to me 'you as the trade union if you can identify a PCP provision criteria or practice where the employer is not doing disability risk assessments for mental health disability you bring it to this, to these tribunals every single time under section 15 of the equality act which is discrimination arising from disability.

I felt like she wasn't she's instructed me you know to say look you should be coming to these tribunals when disability is not being recognized by the employer and thankfully that case was settled out of court.

And I'm allowed to get a healthy amount but he'd been through a lot of turmoil and trauma himself because his disability wasn't recognized and I'll come on to disability being recognized in more details in a second because we did see some fantastic examples of people with disability being supported in the workplace.

I'm going to mention this guy because of how important he's been to our mental health network and Tony is speaking later and this is Tony Dunbar who's our guest speaker later and I'm going to speak about Tony because he won't speak about himself because he's too humble, but he's done more for us as a network than you'll ever realize.

Tony was the first person who spoke out about his journey and he's going to speak to you all later about his journey an incredibly powerful speaker and his journey is incredibly powerful too now I got a signpost to support Tony when there was a threat of him losing his job because he'll talk about his mental health disability later in his battles with depression but I was told by the manager that Tony was unreliable a little bit unreliable was what the area manager said to me.

I said what do you mean and he said he's setting up every day but sometimes he turns up late or most days he turns up late so I said so he's not unreliable if he's turning up to work every day, he's not unreliable. There must be a reason why Tony is turning up late.

And when we got to the bottom of it there was and we got Tony in flexible start time then all of a sudden same manager who was saying oh they've been unreliable was then championing Tony with his adjustments as being the most reliable person in that unit.

Because of the cost free and simple flexible hour of starting time so we had Tony built in where he could start within an hour of his actual start time so it's being wherever it was between eight and nine or seven eight, he'd give an hour of flexibility. And he'd just come in and do his shift thereafter and that's just an example of how a cost-free reasonable adjustment works.

We can see Tony there Tony's that's in his old pair Thomas in Speke Delivery Office and you can see he was allowed it is a lot into the way of place and the paint approachment as he has with Chris and Tony.

But Tony wrote a piece the Royal Mail magazine he came and spoke at numerous um online webinars we ran and obviously the domino effect I've mentioned when Tony spoke, we've seen a real acceleration of people stepping forward because it's like Tony was almost like the icebreaker.

So, in 2019 I think we had something like 80 guided conversations done. By the end of 2020 we've reached over 250 and it was Tony through his conversations and through his honesty in the way he spoke, spoke about his journey enabling more people to step forward so we owe a lot to Tony Dunbar .



And there's a little piece he did for the Royal Mail and paper the courier about being guided through the door through a guided conversation just being able to sit down talk about his journey have someone with a listening ear you know making sure there was an action plan for Tony going forward but again you can see there over 250 guided conversations since 2019 and one thing I want to mention about that is the retention in work rate so it's around about 89 percent.

So, when the CWU do guided conversations or stress risk assessments we tend to keep people in work because lots of people don't want to stay off work lots of people want to stay in work with an action plan you know and we've got so many good examples of these guided conversations or stress risk assessments as the norm.

You know when they're done right and when they're done properly then people do see a benefit and also that's when the employer starts to notice and take real notes when they see that retention in work rate is high so that was the real caveat for Royal Mail to look at this and say okay yeah retention in work rate is high let's do more because they want more bums on seats. But we do as a trade union because we know that people need support again, I put that on the screen there because that's that's Speke Delivery Office where Tony worked and it's actually much better than that. That photograph is from a couple of years ago but it's actually flooded with all Tony's artwork you know.

At the time the area manager said it's okay bring an art into the into the workspace I said absolutely it is I said not a fire hazard is it I said no it's not and you know and he had all those challenges but he brought them in.

But I will mention the local rep there Jay who said when Tony starts to bring the artwork his artwork into his office more people start to have a break because they'd rather go in there and you don't see the bars on the windows which you can probably see through the artwork now when you go in there.

You can see Tony's art and his journey because depression is encapsulated in his art and it's fantastic art by the way and I'll come on to the theme because there'll be a bit of an unveiling later a piece of another piece of new art that Tony did for us.

But you can see this is all from a conversation where it's ended up and Tony being supported and his colleagues getting benefits out of it as well there's a blog that Tony's written as well on the Unionsafety website if you want to read it.

Have a good read of it because it's very very powerful and just moving on to one of the emerging risks as well I know we've got Miranda and Frida here later talking about climate risk. But this is a big risk to us now as a Trade Union - climate change and climate risks.

Okay so there was a motion carried at the TUC Congress about a failover scheme of 30 degrees for outdoor workers we need to support that and we need to work with people who want to work with us as well.

I know myself Mark and Mark Evans have spoken to Andy Morse from Liverpool University who's wanting to work with us as a trade union on climate risks, and have

a new risk matrix looking at outdoor workers and what they're exposed to in terms of the weather elements you know you can see there it's not just heat as well you can see the recent events from that was Storm Darragh.

The image on the right-hand side was the crushed vehicle from Storm Doris a couple of years ago where a tree came down in one of the leafy tree-lined areas of Liverpool and basically split a runaway vehicle in two.

And I spoke to the policy Mark who was on the delivery update and he said I was off 30 seconds of making that plan he said but for the grace of God he said I have a deadline that's true so you can see we need to challenge businesses on this and make sure severe weather risk assessments are robust.

But we also need to present our own arguments on this about climate change and climate risk because other people are doing this now even the likes of the Ministry of Defence, they've come up with this new test on climate injury risks and a new risk matrix looking at heat injury and cold weather short and ironically, they have less time than some of our people on the streets have, you know. So, they've capped their outdoor times at four hours you know when they're doing marches and that because of the real risks in certain weather conditions.

So, we need to do much more than this as a trade union and we need to support the likes of Heat Strike as well and make sure they know that as a Trade Union we're backing them, and know what activity that they're undertaking because it is becoming a real risk to us now the change of climate.

One more thing for me is a little bit about the rise of AI and 'risk assumption'. Okay. We're seeing this quite a lot so AI is the new thing that's occurring now and the HSE going to reach a point where it's no longer novel and it's managing the same way as any other risk.

But what we're seeing is that AI is discriminatory by design when it's used as a management system because it doesn't take account of age and gender disability it will have a monitoring system that has a standard template and it's you know, if you're loading in a warehouse you've got to do 40 passes an hour and you're being monitored by the AI system.

If you do 38 it's not good enough but it doesn't take into account any age disability related issues or gendered issues so we need to be all over this as a trade union and look at the potential risk there.

One thing we need to do is it alleviates 'risk assumption' which has occurred in quite a lot you'll see this now as well in most years as reps we're looking at risk assessments online.

You know virtual risk assessments you can use in Google Earth and Google Maps and they're not actually going out and doing physical risk assessments because they believe you can do it online and get the risk assessments done that way.

**We believe that's 'risk assumption' and not 'risk assessments.'**

So, we need to be really all over the emerging rise of the artificial intelligence and make sure we tackle that as a trade union because there is there is good and bad and some of it is, is good.

I'll mention one thing. There are no marks talked about in the dog attack risks in Merseyside and what's happening in Wales now with Swansea bay and a dog attack out of the UK, but this is the potential good of AI.

This is the virtual um Labrador dog digitally assisted virtual environment that stands for and this is an ai design dog where you put on the headset and basically in the room with an aggressive dog and you learn your reactions from the dog's response to you.

It's an incredibly good system and Liverpool University offer that to people who want to go in and view this in their digital centre up in Mount Pleasant in Liverpool.

It's an incredible experience because when I was in this the room with this virtual dog, I took steps back when the dog came for me and in my head, I knew this was a virtual animal in front of me but it was incredibly realistic. But then I learned from my reaction. So, this is the type of good stuff we want to be involved in in design.

You know this can be used for training now. I know the guy I spoke to in Liverpool University said you don't have to send crane drivers up now to do their testing on cranes because you're doing a room with a virtual surrounding, all done through a training lab. So, this is something that, you know, examples a good aspect of AI. And if anyone wants to sort of get involved in this stuff and dog safety, you know, you're welcome to join any of the meetings that we have.

The Merseyside Dog Safety Partnership is still going strong. It's called the Merseyside Dog Safety Partnership but it's right across the UK. It represents everyone across the UK.

Obviously now Conrad in Wales is taking up the challenge now to speak to Welsh Government and support on that. Because through our work with Liverpool University and the research they're doing, we realised there was a massive risk issue in the Swansea Bay area. So, we've gone from Liverpool being a dog attack hub of the UK, which is in Knowsley.

We've now moved to an extent where Swansea is now twice as fast as what Liverpool have been over the last 10 years. So, we need to look at these emerging risks and react to them.

So, the Welsh Dog Safety Partnership really has been driven by the CWU.

So, we're now involved with Welsh Government. We're trying to get service level agreements in the police down there, in the Gwent Police and other police forces. The Atlas system, the Animal Threat Level Assessment system, which is designed, owned and controlled by the CWU.

We're using that now in Wales. We've used it in the Merseyside. And all that is, that's a near-miss reporting system for anyone.

Whether it's a PC engineer running a house, whether it's a parcel post driver, whether it's a runaway or posting on the streets. Report this near-miss because these are sections of the Dangerous Dogs Act. And we have seen some fantastic results from near-miss being reported on Atlas.

So that system is now live in Wales. I think Conrad said you've had three reports already this week. It went live on the 7th.

So, you've had three near-miss reports already in one week down in Wales. So, you can see there is good and bad with AI. But I'd urge anyone, because of the risks that we face as a trade union with dog attacks, try and get involved in these groups and join any of the online meetings.

I'll share the online meeting registration with Paul for the next Merseyside Dog Safety Partnership meeting. Come on in, because you'll be listening to the experts, the real experts. You've got Dr John Sullivan, Professor Carrie Westcross, the real dog fights experts in the world.

They're on these meetings and they're giving us really valuable information. I'll just finish with my mention of PTSD. We are seeing an incredible amount of PTSD, complex cases because of dog attacks now.

And obviously we then recognise that as disability.

But sadly, two years ago, one of our people who joined us in this conference has had to retire from Royal Mail at 23 years of age after suffering a horrific dog attack and was early retired because of PTSD, 23, lovely and a postie, she was seen as a career opportunity for life for her and had to retire because of the complexity of her PTSD.

She developed panic disorder when we tried to get her back on delivery. So, this remains a real risk for us. Dog attacks, they are horrific.

And we're seeing more level 3 and level 4 bites. Level 3 and level 4 bites are rated on a Dunbar bite scale. When we talk about level 3 and level 4 bites, we're talking about multiple wound injuries and flesh being removed.

So, we're talking about level 5 is fatality on Dunbar bite scale. And we're seeing more level 3 and level 4 bites on postal workers, PT engineers, parcels, delivery drivers. So, on the back of that, we are speaking to Sheffield University because they're doing research into the risks that delivery workers face when they're out on the streets.

And one of the risks that we said as well is access to toilets and access to welfare facilities. So last month, we shared some more details on the Just Can't Wake Up scheme because there's over 9,000 toilets available to anybody with bowel or bladder disability who are working on delivery.

So, we sent out an LTB last month and we're going to send an LTB out again later this month because it's not only Prostate Cancer Awareness Month, it's Bowel Cancer Awareness Month.

And there's lots of people in our Trades Union out there working in the communities not having ready access to toilets. So, we need to make them aware of these schemes and we need to campaign to do more on that because everyone has the right to access the toilets when they're working. So, I think I'll finish there, but I'll just leave you, because I know Tony's speaking later, but I'll just leave you with that statement because everything does start with a conversation.

Someone mentioned that to me years ago when I was speaking to him when we were dealing with a stress issue and he always comes back to me and gives me the idea for the Domino Slide. Everything does start with a conversation and hopefully in this room we've got lots of listening ears because the support we've seen in the region over the last five or six years, especially support people through disability or risk issues or stress, has been second to none. I will just say that I was on a meeting with Gordon Mayo last week and he mentioned the North West region as the leading light.

That was the senior safety advisor shining the lights on the North West region, knowing what we're up to, knowing what we do, and that's credit to everyone on the route within the region because the reputation does precede itself. But please remember that everything does start with a conversation and plenty of us have got listening ears if you ever need to have that conversation.

### **Q&A Section:**

You mentioned the age issue and the over 55 workers. What we did in Liverpool, we created an age sensitive questionnaire and what we did find is a lot of people of the same age have disability without actually realising they have disability. So, we designed a stress questionnaire to harvest as much information about these people as we could and then react to that stress questionnaire.

I can share that with you, an example of what it's like, which you may be able to go and see your colleagues with, ask them to fill it in. At least that way then you'll see how it's designed. It's designed for us to get information so that we can best support the individual.

I think we need to do some more on this as well in terms of age sensitive risk assessments and we need to push the employers on this as well. Because a lot of people who have given long service to the employer, 20, 30, 40 years, are struggling later in life because of stress and they will stay quiet because they just want to get to retirement age. So, we've got to do more to reach out to those people.

So, I'll share that with you, but we do find a lot of those people, when we complete those surveys, we identify them as covering under the Equality Act because through the surveys they link some health conditions that we can support on. So, once we

then get them covered under the 2010 Equality Act, it does put a bit of a ring of steel around them. But I will share that with you Rob, so come and speak to me later.

You mentioned the Just Can't Wait card scheme and Crohn's.

I've got Crohn's, so I've had Crohn's now since 2016.

Found out late in life, but I use the Just Can't Wait card for that reason. Now there are long bladder disability risk assessment templates that we can share with you. So, part of the reasonable adjustment is what's called concessionary rest agreements, where people need to access a toilet quickly.

So, I think what we need to do as a trade union as well is try and get more businesses to buy into the Just Can't Wait card scheme and allow access. But some of the companies you may not know, like Co-op, Waitrose, Zara, you've got this card that will allow you to use the toilet. There's over 9,000 of these shops around the country that have bought into this scheme, allowing you to access toilets.

And it just doesn't cover bowel and bladder disability. We've got people using it for endometriosis, adenomyosis, menopause, prostrate. So, all these cards, what they do is they access your toilets that you may not know about.

But that disability risk assessment, any bowel or bladder disability needs to be completed. And you argue then there's a reasonable adjustment for concessionary rest agreements. And we've got templates there which I'll happily share with you.

But there's far too many people struggling without realising what they're entitled to. We've got a champion that likes these schemes and these cards, and the Toilet Map UK, and the Radar Keys. Because so many people out there, and we've got people who are yawning in the back of vans as well.

And that's the harsh truth. I spoke to a BT colleague down in Birmingham this week, and she said I've got a bucket in the back of my van because of the situation I'm faced with, because I can't find toilets without a map there. And that's a scandal really, isn't it? We've got to do more on that.

But look out for the LTB, that should be coming out, because they will list all these locations. But drop me an email because we've got those risk assessment templates that you can use for your colleagues there. Last one, Comrade.

You mentioned Section 15 under the Equality Act. Normally when we get our patient health reports, there's a disability declaration in there. But if we identify disability ourselves, we should be writing to the employer, there's a disability standard letter template that we developed.

When we identify potential disability as a trade union rep, we write to the employer, we tell them we've identified disability as we believe you've identified disability, and ask them for their opinion on it, Whether they agree with us or not.

I've done it many times, 99 times out of 100, the employer will concede disability because you're presenting the evidence to them. So, disability under the Equality Act, something that has lasted 6 months or likely to last 12 months, and impacted on your living conditions, physical or mental health condition, then that is normally classed as a disability.

But we have got that letter there, Comrade, so I'll share that. I might just ask Chris Ingram to pop some of the stuff onto the Union Safety website, if that's OK. There's a load already on there as well, under the e-Library, under Equality.

So, Comrade, on the unionsafety.eu website, I think that letter is actually on there.

CWU, identifying disability as a trade union, informing the employer, we believe our membership is covered under the 2010 Equality Act. And I'll say it 9 times out of 10, normally the employer will back away and accept that, because we're presenting them with hard evidence for reasons why we believe that person is disabled.

It's quite useful, it makes a lot of difference. If you have a look on your table, that's the union website.

John: Ellen? You'll be taking an hour off your week at this rate, Comrade.

Q: Hi, thanks a lot, that's really interesting.

I just find the stuff on public toilets quite interesting, because we've had public services getting decimated, obviously, all over the country. And I know it's a lot of Manchester, and I'm sure it's the same everywhere else. I was just wondering, listening to all the talk going on about 9,000 people with disabilities, and people that are affected by this, I just wondered if you were doing any campaigning to the government around reopening our public toilets?

A: Yeah, I think that's a really great suggestion.

But we did raise a motion to conference a couple of years ago, in a campaign to the Minister of Communities, about the lack of public toilets out there. And there's a thing called Toilet Leash, which is actually a phenomenon in the UK, where people with any kind of urgent toilet need to stay at home, they don't go out. People don't go into shopping centres now because there's no access to toilets.

So, Toilet Leash is a real phenomenon. It's here in the UK; it's happening in big numbers. Even our elderly community, they won't venture into places where there's no toilets, because they need access to the toilet.

So, I think it's one of our key campaigns. I think we've got to do more. We've got to raise awareness of the fact that, you know, go public toilets, it's what we pay our council tax for really, is to have access to go and use a loo, when we need to use a loo.

But that phenomenon in Toilet Leash is real. It occurs, there's people who do not leave their house, because they know if they go into a city centre, there's no toilets. So, they decide not to go into that city centre.

Then you look around, it's like shops and city centres are crumbling and closing, because there's no provision for public toilets. You go to the likes of Cheshire Oaks, it is flooded with people, because there's ample toilets over there. So, people will venture to a place where they can go and do it.

But I do think you're right, we need to revisit those campaigns again and do some more on that.

ENDS